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Pat Tricarico and Winnie Gillotti: Marian Library Oral Histories

Pat Tricarico

Winnie Gillotti

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University of Dayton
Marian Library

Marian Library Oral Histories: Pat Tricarico and Winnie Gillotti

Date: 18 June 2019
Interviewees: Pat Tricarico, Winnie Gillotti
Interviewer: Kayla Harris
Recording by: Ryan O'Grady

00:00:05 [Kayla Harris]

This interview is being conducted as a continuation of the Marian Library's 75th Anniversary Oral History Project. The interviewer is Marian Library Archivist, Kayla Harris. Video recording is being done by Digital Projects Manager, Ryan O'Grady, and we have two narrators today: Pat Tricarico and Winnie Gillotti.

00:00:27 [Pat Tricarico]

Tricarico.

00:00:28 [Kayla Harris]

Tricarico, I'm sorry (laughing).

00:00:30 [Pat Tricarico]

That's all right.

00:00:31 [Kayla Harris]

I wrote it down, even. (laughing) Today is Tuesday, June 18th, 2019, and we are in Roesch Library. So thank you both for agreeing to be a part of this project and for letting me butcher your name again.

00:00:44 [Pat Tricarico]

(laughing) That's okay.

00:00:45[Kayla Harris]

So, could you please each say your name, so that for the video we're oriented to who is who?

00:00:53[Winnie Gillotti]

Winnie Gillotti.

00:00:56 [Pat Tricarico]

Pat Tricarico.

00:00:59 [Kayla Harris]

Thank you. So, the first question I want to ask you ladies today is what first brought you to the Marian Library?

00:01:08 [Winnie Gillotti]

My friend Pat.

00:01:09

(laughing)

00:01:11[Kayla Harris]

Feel free to elaborate. When was this?

00:01:14 [Winnie Gillotti]

I don't know how many years Pat has volunteered, but she talked about it every Christmas and said, "You have to come and see the exhibits." And I said, "Well, someday I'd like to. "I think I'd like to do that." And so she approached me last summer and said, "Do you still want to do this?" And I said, "Yes," so she introduced me. I think that might have been in June or July last year. It's been very interesting.

00:01:42 [Kayla Harris]

And what first brought you here, Pat?

00:01:43 [Pat Tricarico]

Well, I had a friend too, Ann Persensky, and she goes to the same church I go to at St. Luke's in Beavercreek. And I've always had an interest in nativities, but it was kind of subtle. I wasn't really acknowledging it, but she mentioned that she volunteered here, and I said, "Oh, I'd love to do that," and she said, "Well, come along." And so, 10 years later, here I am.

00:02:10 [Kayla Harris]

Great! And did either of you have any connections to the University of Dayton before this, whether as a graduate, or working here, or knowing people that worked here?

00:02:24 [Pat Tricarico]

Well, my husband went to UD, but I didn't.

02:31 [Kayla Harris]

So you have an alumni in the family?

00:02:32 [Pat Tricarico]

Right, yeah, and some other relatives, nephews.

00:02:37 [Winnie Gillotti]

And my husband, his brothers, daughter-in-laws, my three children, and two grandchildren are all UD, in UD or graduates of UD.

00:02:47 [Kayla Harris]

Wow.

00:02:50 [Pat Tricarico]

Of course, we're Flyer fans.

00:02:52 [Kayla Harris]

That always helps.

00:02:53 [Winnie Gillotti]

Right, Flyer fans too. Had season tickets.

00:02:57 [Kayla Harris]

So, what careers in your life, what other, what career did you come from, or what type of work did you do previously?

00:03:08 [Pat Tricarico]

We're both retired nurses, so we went to nurses' training together at Good Samaritan Hospital, so we've been friends since we were 18, so that's quite a few years ago.

00:03:23 [Winnie Gillotti]

Without going into too much detail (laughing).

00:03:29 [Kayla Harris]

Okay, so let's talk a little bit about what you do volunteering at the Marian Library. So, what are some of the types of things you do over at Fitz Hall?

00:03:43 [Pat Tricarico]

Well, we... We do a lot of checking and double-checking. I even told Winnie when she started it's kinda like nursing. When you give a medication, you check, you double-check, three times before you give it, and I kinda associate nativities with that because every little piece has a number, and every little piece has a location, and so when we get these nativity sets in, they're assigned a number and a location, which I mean like a shelf and a box. And we send them out at Christmas time. When we get them back in, we have to check them, and see that all the pieces are there and that all the sets/all the pieces have the same number so that they don't all get mixed up, because we have over 3,000. We'd never be able to find a little lost lamb, for instance, if you put it in the wrong place. So you have to check and re-check. And wrap, we do museum-quality handling, like acid-free material around them when we pack them away on the shelf and pack them so that they don't get broken as they're being handled.

00:05:00 [Winnie Gillotti]

And from my perspective, just being new, I've been doing a lot of packing to go to maybe the Roesch Library, or Notre Dame, or wherever it's going, and then there's a lot of paperwork associated, so you have to make sure you make that out correctly, especially if it's going to a specific place. So it's been real interesting.

00:05:25 [Kayla Harris]

That's funny that you likened it to a kind of medication checking (laughing).

00:05:30 [Pat Tricarico]

It is. You have to double-check always.

00:05:33 [Kayla Harris]

Yeah.

00:05:34 [Winnie Gillotti]

Some of the pieces might have 15 in them, some might be two, and then, you think you've got them all wrapped and everything, and then you think, oh, do I have 15?

00:05:44 [Winnie Gillotti]

(Both laughing) And you have to double-check.

00:05:50 [Kayla Harris]

So, right now, it's in June, and many people often don't start thinking about or preparing for Christmas time until much later in the year. Could you tell us a little bit about what it's like right now, even though it is several months out from Christmas? Like what a typical day looks like this time of year?

00:06:13 [Pat Tricarico]

Well, it's kinda quiet, actually. But we already know the theme for... we usually know the theme for the next Christmas coming up even before the current Christmas is over. Like last December, we knew what the theme for this coming Christmas would be, and, for instance, one year it was animals. The emphasis was on animals, and another year it was houses. This year it happens to be on volunteers, and so we each got to pick out our favorite and told a story about that. And so we're selecting the nativities for display for this coming year.

00:07:04 [Winnie Gillotti]

And when of the other departments have said what they want, then we start packing, but that's a ways away.

00:07:12 [Kayla Harris]

So, what do you find to be the most fulfilling part of what you do?

00:07:20 [Winnie Gillotti]

I enjoy the art of it all. There's so many beautiful pieces. It's amazing every day.

00:07:27 [Kayla Harris]

Is there a particular style of art that you're more drawn to, or?

00:07:33 [Winnie Gillotti]

I sort of like the porcelains and the more though, although we do have this beautiful wood set from Africa that, how many pieces was in it?

00:07:43 [Winnie Gillotti]

20, 30, something like that?

00:07:44 [Pat Tricarico]

30 easily, yeah.

00:07:45 [Winnie Gillotti]

And each piece was made of a different type of wood.

00:07:48 [Kayla Harris]

Was that the piece from Malawi, I think?

00:07:51 [Winnie Gillotti]

Yeah, I think so. I think so, yeah.

00:07:53 [Kayla Harris]

Yeah, that's beautiful. And what about you, Pat? What do you find most appealing?

00:07:58 [Pat Tricarico]

It's hard for me to say. I like the art part of it, but what I was surprised about is I like the cultural part of it that comes from the different parts of the world. And especially, the spiritual part of it, I think, shows up when, for instance, if people, say, in the South Pacific, and they live on an island, and they pick up seed pods or shells or coconut shells or shells, and they put them all together and make a nativity set out of it. I think they've been spiritually directed to do that, and sometimes I feel like when I'm handling these sets, I kind of feel their spirit come through, and I like that part of it a lot.

00:08:44 [Kayla Harris]

Yeah. Do either of you have any nativities in your own home, and if so, how many, what types?

00:08:58 [Winnie Gillotti]

I made my nativity set in 1968 in ceramics, and I've put it out every year since 1968. I have big words on it, "FRAGILE" "FRAGILE"

00:09:09

(Kayla laughing)

00:09:10 [Winnie Gillotti]

Because the grandkids help me put it up and everything. But I've really enjoyed it.

00:09:18 [Pat Tricarico]

I had just one for years and years, and then we traveled to Cancun. I bought one down in Mexico, and just here and there I have bought different ones. And bought a couple in Kentucky last year, so now I probably have maybe 15, and some of them are sets, and some are just one-piecers, or little tiny things painted on a stone, but still.

00:09:45 [Kayla Harris]

Do you put them all out each year?

00:09:47 [Pat Tricarico]

Yeah, I do.

00:09:49 [Kayla Harris]

And maybe for each of you it probably doesn't take nearly as much. You don't have to do it nearly as far back (laughing) as we do here sometimes at the Marian Library.

00:09:59 [Winnie Gillotti]

Yeah.

00:10:03 [Kayla Harris]

Do either of you volunteer anywhere else?

00:10:07 [Winnie Gillotti]

I currently am not.

00:10:09 [Pat Tricarico]

I volunteer at St. Luke's, my parish, in the crafts department, and also, I was doing funeral lunches. After the funeral, we provide a lunch for the family, and I think that's about all I do right now.

00:10:30 [Kayla Harris]

What keeps you returning as a volunteer to the Marian Library? Why do you come back each week?

00:10:38 [Pat Tricarico]

I always say, when we leave, and they always say, "Thank you so much," and I always say, "I get much more than I give," and it's the camaraderie, and the friendship and... just getting, just having the privilege of handling these. Some of these are one-of-a-kind pieces, are priceless. And I just love it.

00:11:05 [Winnie Gillotti]

And it's a surprise every Tuesday. You never know quite what you're gonna be doing. You could be coming over here and dismantling an exhibit and taking it back, or you could be getting another one ready to go. You just never know which. And so it's interesting, and the people are wonderful.

00:11:24 [Pat Tricarico]

And Winnie and I had high-stress jobs. I worked in the emergency room, and then I worked in the recovery room, which is post-anesthesia. She worked in labor and delivery. And to have a job where everybody's breathing, nobody's bleeding to death, and-- - Nobody's in a hurry.

00:11:42

(All laughing)

00:11:43 [Pat Tricarico]

Is just very relaxing. It's just wonderful.

00:11:48 [Kayla Harris]

I hear many good things about kind of the...well, there are several volunteers who come in on other days, but the bulk of you come in on Tuesdays, and so, yeah, well, a bit about that kind of camaraderie. Do you do things outside of Tuesdays with other volunteers? Or tell me a little bit about what it's like with that group together on Tuesdays.

00:12:16 [Winnie Gillotti]

Well, we always have a wonderful lunch. We all sit together, and say grace, and have lunch, and a lot of conversation back and forth, and it's interesting.

00:12:25 [Winnie Gillotti]

Pat brought up the Wright brothers today, so (laughing). We chit chat while we're working too, also, and... I forgot what your question was. (laughing)

00:12:39 [Kayla Harris]

Just, I'm just curious about kinda like I said, the camaraderie.

00:12:42 [Pat Tricarico]

Yeah, we don't have a set thing that we do outside of this, but when something comes up maybe that we think the group would enjoy, we'll do it. It's not a set thing. And we have a Christmas party, and we have the garden party that's coming up in July. That's a standard thing every year. A couple things are standard.

00:13:11 [Kayla Harris]

What would you say is your favorite nativity from the collection? And if it's too hard to pick one, you can pick a couple, and then why?

00:13:24 [Winnie Gillotti]

I have no favorites yet. I'm afraid to say because it's overwhelming. There are so many. So, on that one, I don't know what to tell you (laughing).

00:13:35 [Kayla Harris]

Well, you did at least say you have some styles you kind of like, right?

00:13:39 [Winnie Gillotti]

Right, right.

00:13:39 [Kayla Harris]

The wooden one, okay.

00:13:41 [Winnie Gillotti]

I tend to like the traditional nativity, but it's really interesting. We had the all-wood piece with many, many figures, which we didn't even know what some of them were doing, and the set that was made out of coal, set made out of straw, cork, it's interesting.

00:14:06 [Pat Tricarico]

I always have a favorite, and then two weeks later I'll have a new favorite. It's so hard to pick, but one that keeps catching my eye is the one from South Africa, and all the pieces are covered with beads, completely covered, front and back, the animals, the people, little tiny beads. You have to really see it to understand what I'm talking about, but when you see our set, if you see one from South Africa covered by beads, that's it. And they're about this tall, so it's easy to see.

00:14:42 [Kayla Harris]

So what type of animals are in that set? I'm curious.

00:14:45 [Pat Tricarico]

They have African stuff like giraffes, and...I don't know if they have any hippos, elephants. I do remember the giraffe and then some smaller things. I think it's in that one.

00:15:10 [Kayla Harris]

And then, my last question that I have for you ladies today. What would you like to see for the future at the Marian Library? In 2018, the Marian Library celebrated its 75th anniversary, so what would you like to see in the next 75 years?

00:15:28 [Pat Tricarico]

You mean the Library as a whole?

00:15:31 [Kayla Harris]

It could be the Marian Library, it could be specifically the nativity collection.

00:15:37 [Pat Tricarico]

I didn't really realize, when I started volunteering with the nativities, how much involved we were going to be with the Marian Library. I didn't realize it was all connected. But I would like to see a year-round display of the nativities, like a museum. So when people came to Dayton, Ohio, they could come to the university and see a collection of nativities from around the world.

00:16:09 [Winnie Gillotti]

It's really kind of hard to explain to people the different types that are available, and I agree with Pat. If there was something where you had a little from maybe every country, which is mind-boggling, or a different type, it would be great. We already had little miniatures. Some of them are not as tall as your fingernail, little fingernail, and it's just interesting how they can make something that tiny.

00:16:42 [Kayla Harris]

Strong dedication from the artist. There's some unique craftsmanship displayed, I think. Is there anything else that I haven't asked that you would like to share about your experience volunteering for the Marian Library?

00:17:01 [Winnie Gillotti]

Pat probably could say more than I could, since I'm a newbie.

00:17:07 [Pat Tricarico]

- Well, she's caught on really quick.

00:17:09 [Winnie Gillotti]

Everybody said, "Oh, you seem like you've been here "for years and years."

00:17:13 [Pat Tricarico]

Well, I knew she would, or I wouldn't have asked her (laughing) to join us. 'Cause you have to be really careful. And as nurses, we, you have to be very particular as a nurse and know what you're about and be organized, and that helps. Our background helps. I brought a volunteer once, a friend of mine, and she found it boring, and she's an artist herself, so maybe that, I don't know. I thought she would like it, but she didn't. But I like being bored because for so many years we weren't bored. (laughing) At all. But I don't find it boring at all, not one minute.

00:17:59 [Kayla Harris]

Okay, well, thank you both so much for taking the time to answer these questions and for all the time that you have dedicated to volunteering for the Marian Library. The collection would not be what it is without the work of our many volunteers.

00:18:15 [Pat Tricarico]

That's what they say, yeah.

00:18:17 [Winnie Gillotti]

I'm sure.

00:18:18 [Kayla Harris]

Thank you both.

00:18:19 [Pat and Winnie]

You're welcome.